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Young Jack Harkaway AND THE IDOLS OF GOLD.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.



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Young Jack Harkaway AND THE IDOLS OF GOLD.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG,

Author of "Young Jack Harkaway and the Counterfeitors," "Young Jack Harkaway and the Arabs," "Mole Among the Mussulmans," "Young Jack Harkaway in Spain," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I. THE LAND OF FIRE.

"LAND ho!"

This was the cry of the lookout man on board the steamer *Vigilant*, belonging to young Jack Harkaway.

She was commanded by Captain Sanford, an experienced mariner.

On board were young Jack, Harry Girdwood, Mr. Mole, Tinker and Monday.

Yes, the Land of Fire, where Jack expected to find idols of gold among the giants of Patagonia, was well in sight.

It was a low lying shore with a sandy beach on which the waves rippled gently.

But it was beautifully wooded with date palms, cocoanut and bread fruit trees.

Before them was a small land-locked bay, which afforded an excellent anchorage.

The weather was calm and mild.

Beyond the trees wreaths of smoke ascended into the air, showing that volcanic forces were at work.

A seismic wave might shake the country at any moment.

Some miles inland were a range of mountains capped with a blue haze.

All the party were on deck.

"This is Patagonia or Terra del Fuego," exclaimed Captain Sanford, "and we are close to the spot where I was wrecked a few years ago."

"Golly!" cried Monday; "it am fine looking place!"

"Where do the natives live?" asked Jack.

"Behind that range of mountains you see in the distance," replied the captain.

"What is the name of their city?"

"Karaki, and the king's name is Malagan."

"You have been there and seen the idols of gold?"

"Certainly. They made me a prisoner, but I contrived to escape. You will find all I am telling you is correct."

"Steam into the harbor and let us cast anchor," said young Jack.

Captain Sanford went amidships to direct the chief engineer in his course.

"You will let me have one of those idols of gold, Harkaway?" said Mole.

"We have to get them first, sir, before we think of dividing the spoil," replied young Jack.

"That is so, but you generally succeed in anything you attempt."

"I am tolerably lucky, I will admit."

"You have all your father's go and vim."

"Thank you for the compliment. You deserve an idol after that," said Jack.

"He's the boss at everything," remarked Tinker, who had the most unbounded admiration for his young master.

"You want another idol, I suppose—and Monday, too!"

"I could do with one," replied the Prince of Limbi; "yes, sah."

"As for me, I am not covetous. I'd rather have a gold ring to put on my finger."

"I will do the best I can for all of you, but you will have to help me."

"Ay," observed Harry, "there is fighting before us!"

"It won't amount to much," continued Mole. "Captain Sanford tells me the natives have no firearms."

"True," answered Jack, "but they are numerous. They have spears and wooden swords, and know how to use them."

"Giants, aren't they?"

"A big race. Seven footers, I believe, from all I have heard from Sanford."

"We shall have to call you Jack the Giant Killer."

"Good joke, sir, push it along."

"You won't do anything to them when you meet them," said Harry.

"Oh, no! Not a thing," laughed Jack, with an assumption of innocence which did not belong to him.

The *Vigilant* steamed safely into the little bay and cast anchor near an inviting grove.

Jack and his friends got into the pinnace and were soon landed.

They had brought tents with them which were promptly pitched, as they preferred to live on shore rather than in the ship.

It gave them more freedom.

The trees they found to be full of monkeys and birds of gaudy plumage.

Among these were parrots, macaws and cockatoos.

Tinker climbed up a cocoanut tree, and threw ripe, milky nuts down to Monday.

The sailors brought furniture from the ship, and under Jack's superintendence made the tents comfortable and fit for the most fastidious to inhabit.

Mr. Mole went to the beach, and came back with a good sized turtle, which he had captured.

"Soup, my boy, turtle soup," he exclaimed, exhibiting his valuable prize.

"You are a good caterer," said Jack.

The ship's cook was summoned, and the flesh of the big crustacean was soon boiling in the pot.

For a long time the ship's stores were ample for all purposes required.

"I like this place," remarked Jack, eating some bread fruit.

Captain Sanford had joined him, and overheard the observation.

"It is all right," he replied, "when you don't have an earthquake. That is the difficulty."

"Do such things often occur?"

"I don't say often, but they do happen in some parts, though not near the coast. There was one ten years ago."

"How do you know that? Did the natives tell you?"

"No. I wasn't with them long enough to learn their language," replied Captain Sanford. "In the town of Karaki are two captive American sailors."

"Indeed! You surprise me!" cried Jack.

"They were wrecked on this coast twenty years ago and captured by the Patagonians."

"Why did they not escape when you did?"

"They did not want to."

"How is that? I can't understand it," Jack answered.

"It is easily explained. They have married native women. Got a family of half-bred children and settled down. Their names are Beaver and Mills, both from New Bedford, in Massachusetts."

"You got your information from them," hazarded Jack.

"Exclusively. They are old now. Do a bit of farming. Keep cows and sheep and are on very friendly terms with King Malagan," said Captain Sanford.

At this moment Harry Girdwood came up.

"Monday and Tinker want to go on a scout," he exclaimed. "Will you give them permission?"

"I see no objection!" replied Jack; "tell them to keep their eyes open and return before dark."

"Very well!"

"If they are late I shall be anxious about them!"

Harry went away, delivered his message, and Monday departed with Tinker to explore the country.

They little knew the adventures that were before them.

There was danger ahead in that strange, unexplored country.

But happily for their peace of mind they were both ignorant of the fact.

Had they been otherwise they would not have gone out in such a lighthearted manner.

Jack busied himself that afternoon in engineering work.

He caused the sailors to throw up an embankment of sand round the camp.

In various points he put machine guns in position and arranged the night watchers.

It was not his intention to let the natives catch him and his party napping.

Captain Sanford thoroughly approved of and indorsed his actions.

The Patagonians, he stated, often came down to the coast from their capital, Karaki, for fish.

If they saw the steamer they would not hesitate to attack the newly improvised camp.

An hour before dark the turtle soup and steaks were served, which were partaken of with great relish.

It was an agreeable change from the ordinary bill of fare on board ship.

Night fell suddenly.

Neither Monday nor Tinker put in an appearance.

What had become of them?

That was the all absorbing question that perplexed everybody in young Jack Harkaway's party.

CHAPTER II.

THE ADVENTURES OF MONDAY AND TINKER.

WHEN the two adventurers—Monday and Tinker—got out of the wood they saw a level plain ahead of them, beyond which was a range of mountains.

According to Captain Sanford's statement, these were circular in formation and inclosed a pleasant valley, in which was the city of Karaki with its flocks, herds and cornfields.

The only entrance to it was through a narrow defile, always closely guarded.

This made it almost impregnable.

"I can't sit still and do nothing," remarked Tinker. "On board ship I was always helping the sailors."

"That's my disposition," replied Monday; "though I am not so active as I once was."

"There is a kick in the old horse yet, though."

"You bet!"

As they proceeded the wreaths of smoke proceeding from the subterranean fires, spirally ascending into the air, became more numerous.

They did not appear to be dangerous, however.

Occasionaly underground rumblings were heard.

The ground about these coils of smoke was soft, slushy, and exhaled a sulphurous smell.

"I wonder what all this steam is?" said Tinker. "They are boiling a big pot below."

"Take care you don't fall into it," replied Monday.

"Pshaw! What are you giving me? There aren't no holes here."

"There is never any smoke without fire."

"Anyway I'm going a little closer to have a look," continued the venturesome Tinker.

"You'll come to grief if you don't look out," continued Monday.

"These am not de tings to be trifled with."

"Who said they were, Softy?"

"If you play with fire, child, you'll burn your fingers, sure. Bear that in mind."

"Not me. What do you take me for?"

"There isn't much discount on you for being a headstrong fool. Go on and see what will be de occurrence."

"That's just what I'm going to do."

"Good scheme; push it along. You'll get into a jag in some morass."

"Think that will be the end of it?"

"Certain sure."

Tinker laughed lightly and went on his way, but he had not gone far before he sank up to his legs in a quagmire.

"Help!" he cried. "I'm going down!"

"Didn't I tell you so," said Monday. "There's no sense in you boys."

"Pull me out; I'm going lower."

"I've a good mind, Massa Tinker, to let you explore this lower territory."

"What for?"

"Because you wouldn't take good advice."

"Come to my rescue."

"If I do, I may go down same as you. I'll not come unless this will be a lesson to you; people's got to learn lessons in this life to teach them wisdom."

"Leave off preaching. I'm going gradually lower down, old man." This was an indisputable fact.

Tinker was gradually sinking into the slimy, sulphurous mud.

Monday gallantly made a rush, seized him by the arm and dragged him to the surface.

He was saved and breathed a sigh of relief.

"A nice sight you've made yourself, haven't you?" said Monday as he threw him on the ground.

"I can crawl through the long grass and clean myself, can't I?" replied Tinker.

"It won't hurt me."

"On the level, I was a fool to risk it; but it won't do you any good to call me down for it."

"Who said it would. You're as bad as young Massa Jack, and always want to have your own way."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"No reason that I know of. It pleases you and doesn't hurt me, only if I hadn't come to the rescue, you'd have gone where the bad niggers go."

"Where's that—Paradise?"

"You'll find out some ob these days, sah, if you don't watch your actions carefully."

"Give me a rest," said Tinker.

He rolled himself in the rank grass to get the mud off his clothes.

All at once he uttered a loud cry and sprang to his feet.

Facing him was a long, black snake.

"Hit him off, Monday," he exclaimed; "give him one in the back quick, or I'll be a goner!"

The snake coiled himself to strike.

Monday was armed with a rifle, a pistol and a knife. The latter he thought the best weapon to use.

In a moment he drew it and slashed at the reptile with good effect.

The first cut made an impression on its back bone, and the second broke its vertebræ altogether.

It was horrible to see the huge thing squirming in tangled coils, with its forked tongue darting in and out, but it was powerless for evil.

Tinker took out his revolver and put a couple of shots into its body.

"You wanted to go for me the worst way," said he, "but I reckon I've got you."

"If it hadn't been for me," remarked Monday, "you'd have fallen down the morass or been snake bitten."

"Thanks to you old fellow; I'm all right."

"Ain't I saying so. Who's contradicting you? Didn't you save my life twice in five minutes?"

"That's pretty near the truse, and yet, although I know you have got some cigars in your pocket and I haven't, you don't offer me one."

"You've got a mouth on you, why didn't you ask?"

"Because I'm one of the modest kind and don't like to. You see I wasn't brought up that way!"

"Oh, you wasn't?"

"No, sah! but I'll take one ob dem regalias if you don't have no objections!"

Tinker handed him his case and gave him a light.

"Now," said Monday; "I'll reciprocate. You should never take anything in the world without giving something in return, or you'll get yourself disliked! Look at this!"

He produced a flask of wine which made Tinker's eyes twinkle and they drank the contents together.

They were now drawing near to the mountains.

It was easy to see the entrance to the defile which gave admission to the valley in which the town of Karaki was situated.

Dark forms of large stature were visible at the mouth of the narrow pass.

Tinker had a small field glass which he raised to his eyes and scrutinized them closely.

They wore garments of roughly made linen and woolen stuff which showed that they had some knowledge of manufactures.

A boy of about six years of age ran out and began to play on the plain.

Suddenly a huge golden eagle swooped down from the mountain towards the child.

It was a magnificent species of the aquila.

"Look!" cried Tinker; "that big bird is going for the boy and will have him too!"

The boy did not see his danger.

He was playing innocently and gathering wild flowers.

"That's a sure thing," answered Monday; "him big enough to carry off a sheep."

"What are you going to do about it? Can't we stop it?"

"My rifle can kill at a thousand yards. Suppose we try a shot at him?"

"You have a deadly aim?"

"Used to once in a time; don't know now."

"Save the poor little wretch if you can," continued Tinker, who had a good heart.

"Mean to have a try for it, sah," Monday replied. "This rifle of mine is warranted to kill at a thousand yards."

The eagle was descending perilously close to the heedless boy.

He was ignorant of his danger.

But the men at the entrance to the pass saw it.

They shouted to him to run back, but he heard them not, for his mind was occupied with the flowers.

The men were unable to help him, because he was some way off and they had no firearms.

It seemed as if in a minute the talons of the large eagle would be plunged in the boy's back.

Then he would be carried up to the bird's eyrie in the mountain and torn to pieces.

Eagles will eat any kind of flesh and have often been known to bear away children.

Perhaps it had a nest of young ones in the heights.

This was quite possible, and it would make him all the more anxious to get prey.

Monday took a steady aim at the monarch of the air.

"Fire!" cried Tinker.

He was becoming painfully excited.

"Wait little bit," replied Monday. "Don't want to waste the shot now I've got the bead on him."

He pulled the trigger.

The eagle was within a dozen yards of the boy, who was stooping down.

Steadily the bullet sped on its way.

It struck the bird in a vital part, and, with a fluttering of its wings, it fell to the ground.

The boy was saved as if by a miracle.

A man with a long gray beard bounded from the defile to the spot. Monday and Tinker advanced to meet him.

The man was white, while the Patagonians were copper colored.

He grasped Monday cordially by the hand, and said in English:

"You have saved my child. How can I thank you?"

"That is nothing," replied Monday. "I ran no risk."

"Still I am eternally your debtor. Have you been wrecked? If so, be careful."

"I intend to be so."

"The natives are hostile to strangers. I was wrecked on this dangerous coast, and have been held by them for several years, but I married one of the king's daughters, and am treated as a friend."

"Are you American or English?"

"The latter—good old British stock."

"We have not been wrecked," added Monday. "Ours is simply an exploring expedition. We have a steamer, plenty of guns, ample provisions, and a full crew."

"Ah! You are rich. Well equipped."

"Certainly. We could lick all you fellows into fits, but we want to come peaceably into your valley and see if we can't trade for your idols of gold."

"Who told you about them?" asked the man.

"One who was a captive in Karaki and made his escape."

"His name?"

"Captain Sanford," answered Monday.

"I thought so. He is a man I remember full well. You are at liberty to come inside the valley with me. I will guarantee you a safe conduct."

"Can we see King Malagan?"

"Yes. He might trade off the idols for arms, ammunition and rum, of which he is very fond."

"That is a weakness, sah, with most savages."

"What part do you come from?"

"Island of Limbi, in the Sumatra group. Me a prince over there."

"Who are you traveling with?"

"Young Jack Harkaway, sah," replied Monday.

At the mention of his name the stranger started.

He appeared to be seized with an emotion which he could not possibly control.

Every limb trembled, and he became deathly pale.

By the exercise of an heroic effort he calmed himself, though his livid lips quivered.

"Will you come with me into the valley?" he said. "I will show you the idols of gold in the temple and introduce you to the king."

"If I can trust you," replied Monday.

He did not like the sudden change in the stranger's appearance at the mention of the name of Harkaway.

There was something peculiar about it which was difficult to explain satisfactorily.

He could not make it out at all.

Yet the man seemed to be genuine enough in his manner.

There was no palpable reason for distrusting him.

"You can safely do that," was the rejoinder.

"No treachery," exclaimed Tinker. "We are armed and can shoot, recollect that."

"You will find me true as the stars," replied the man. "Come, it is lucky we have met. I can befriend you."

He took his boy by the hand, and led the way to the defile.

The others followed him.

Their minds were ill at ease, and Monday was half inclined to turn back.

He resisted the inclination to do so, however.

The defile was a narrow rocky pass, inside which half a dozen gigantic men were standing.

Some were armed with spears, others with wooden swords and big heavy clubs.

When they were inside one of them pushed back a thick wooden door.

Their retreat was effectually cut off.

It was evident that the man had grossly deceived them.

Before they could make any effort to defend themselves, they were seized from behind by the giants.

A few seconds sufficed to deprive them of their weapons.

They were completely at the mercy of the savages.

"Golly," cried Monday, "I am a fool in my old age! Wish some one would come and kick me!"

"I'd like to get a stick and beat myself," said Tinker, in a lachrymose tone.

The old man held up his hand.

"No harm is intended and none will befall you," he exclaimed; "have no fear."

"But this is an act of treachery," replied Tinker.

"I admit that, and will give you my reason for it. You two are prisoners. Your treatment will be good and your lives are safe. The king will make you work in the fields, yet the hours will not be excessive nor the labor hard. You will have the best food and a hut to live in by yourselves."

"I want to go back."

"That is impossible. You are Harkaway's friends. He must die," continued the old man solemnly.

"What harm has he ever done you?"

"He is the son of his father."

"What then?" asked Monday. "You talk in a kind of way I cannot understand."

"You will presently."

"Come to the point, for I suppose you are aiming at one."

"That is a sure thing. I don't talk without an object. Did you hear of or meet Hunston?"

"Ha! you mention him. He was old Harkaway's bitterest enemy!" cried Monday.

"Yes, and Jack Harkaway hounded him to his death."

"How does that concern you?"

The old man drew himself up to his full height, his eyes flashed, and he drew his breath with difficulty.

His emotions were overpowering him again.

"I am Edward Hunston. Alfred Hunston was my brother, and for his death I cannot forgive a Harkaway—father or son!"

At these words Monday and Tinker were greatly surprised.

There was no longer anything to wonder at in the treachery and the animosity of the old man.

Edward Hunston espoused his brother's cause.

He made his fancied wrongs his own, and determined to revenge them.

All the time he forgot that Hunston had brought his fate and his trouble on himself.

They arose from his inherent wickedness, his evil temper, his want of self-control and fiendish disposition.

He alone was to blame for all that had happened in the past.

The elder Harkaway would have let him alone if he had not been always interfering and intriguing.

"That beats everything," said Monday. "This child nebbler expected to meet Hunston's brother way out here."

"Strange things happen in this world, my friend," replied Edward Hunston.

"That's a fac', for sure; but Massa Jack ought not to bear all the fault."

"He was the cause of my poor brother's death."

"No, sah! it was all fair fighting. I am Monday, and I know all about it."

"And I'm Tinker and can corroborate that statement."

"I have heard of you both," said Hunston, "of course you will take your master's part, that is only to be expected, but I am of my own opinion still. Young Jack Harkaway shall be destroyed by the Patagonians."

"If you try that game on you will get the worst of it," Tinker threatened.

"That remains to be proved. He shall be attacked this very night, and I will lead the assault."

"You will make a big mistake and don't you forget it."

"Silence. You are a prisoner. I will not be talked to," cried Hunston.

Old as he was, he had his brother's dominant will and overbearing temper.

"Follow me," he added.

They did so; he led them through the defile into a pleasant valley, well watered and wooded.

The sun was shining brightly, but the heat was not so great as to be unpleasant.

Before them lay the town of Karaki.

All around were gardens, pastures, meadows and corn fields fenced off neatly.

It was as pretty a spot as the eye would wish to look upon.

Fruit grew in abundance, and there was everything that primitive man could wish for.

Reaching the town they beheld two large buildings of rudely made bricks and wood.

One, Hunston explained to them was the temple, the other the palace of King Malagan.

These towered above all the others which were more like bungalows than houses.

Hunston conducted them to the temple, on each side of which edifice were six colossal idols of pure virgin solid gold.

"There are the precious syphnx that your friend, young Jack Harkaway, covets," he said, "but he shall never have them in his possession."

"If you can help it, you mean," replied Tinker.

"I will stop it; such is my intention."

"Don't you think yourself a mighty big personage? It looks like it."

"I am; these idols took years in making. The gold was picked up laboriously in the valley and melted down. They are the pride of the Patagonians."

"We'll have 'em yet, you bet."

"Never!"

"Each one is worth half a million of dollars. They are worth fighting for."

At that moment a Patagonian, who was fully nine feet in height, walked into the temple.

Monday and Tinker were still looking at the grotesque images of gold. Some of the faces of which resembled men, others sheep, and others again, birds.

"The king!" cried Hunston, "all hail Malagan! Down on your knees, captives, and salute his majesty!"

"Not I," answered Tinker, independently; "that is not my form. You don't know me."

"Nor me either, sah," remarked Monday. "I am a prince in my own country."

"It is a pity you didn't stay there, you poor ignorant nigger," retorted Hunston.

This was an insult that Monday could not bear.

Such a term of reproach had never been applied to him in his life before.

It made his blood boil and his indignation rose so high that he would have taken Hunston by the throat, had not the king stepped between them.

"Who have we here?" he asked.

"Two spies, your majesty," replied Hunston. "I caught them outside the defile."

"You are always doing something for the good of Karaki."

"I try to do my best."

"And you invariably succeed. What next?"

"It appears that a man has come here in a steamship, having heard of your idols of gold; he intends to kill you all and steal them."

"Ha! Is that so? It is a daring venture. Let the pass be doubly guarded."

"I have already given orders to that effect."

"Bind these spies! Put them in a hut and to-morrow make them dig their own graves!"

"Will you put them to death?" asked Hunston.

"No, they shall be buried alive," replied King Malagan.

"You condemn them to die of slow starvation, buried in the earth, standing upright with their heads just above the level of the ground."

"Such is our mode of execution here!"

"I will see that your orders are obeyed!"

"The rest of this day and the night is their own. To-morrow they dig their own graves and being buried perish miserably. Give them no food. No drink!"

Tinker looked up.

"This is a harsh sentence," he said, "and it will not do you any good!"

"Do you dare to argue with me?" asked the king.

His huge form swelled with rage.

"When we are missed, we shall be searched for!" continued Tinker.

"Take them away!" cried the king; "order all the fighting men under arms."

"The army shall be ready within four hours!" replied Hunston; "or sooner!"

"That will do!"

"Do you mean to attack the ship and her company?"

"When night falls. Not a man shall escape! No foreigner shall have our golden idols!"

"I commend you for your resolution!"

"We will have their ship and their lives!"

"You are a great king, all sing your praises," answered Hunston, obsequiously.

"It is fitting that they should do so. I govern well," replied Malagan in a complacent tone.

"True, oh, king! May you live forever!"

"None can do that. I hope to live to a good old age for the benefit of my people."

In spite of the desperate position he was in, Tinker could not help grinning.

"You won't," he said, "if young Jack Harkaway gets hold of you. Don't make any mistake, old boy—you will be food for the eagles."

"And you for the worms. Remove them and obey my instructions instantly!"

The king strode away, disappearing through a side door.

Hunston, with a malignant gleam in his eye, ordered Monday and Tinker to leave the temple.

They followed him outside.

Both looked very dejected, but they had hope in their hearts.

Their faith was in the Almighty, and they believed that young Jack would be His agent for their delivery.

Their sentence had gone forth.

There was no doubt that their doom was pronounced.

It was their fate to dig their own graves, be buried alive, and perish miserably by a lingering death.

This was awful to contemplate.

Better far to die quickly; yet while there is life there is hope of rescue.

If King Malagan was rash enough to attack Jack in the night they felt persuaded that he would be repulsed.

The loss he would incur must weaken his forces, which would be in Jack's favor in forcing the defile.

Once inside the valley nothing could stop Jack.

He would sweep the Patagonians before him like sheep with his rifles and machine guns.

That fact was as clear as the sun at noonday, but the time was so short.

Hunston took them to a hut in the town's extremity, gave them some food and water, and when leaving barred the door outside without a word.

Tinker lighted a cigarette and gave one to Monday.

"We've done a nice thing for ourselves," he remarked. "Gone on a scout for something."

"I've been in a worse fix than this before now, with ole Massa Jack," replied Monday.

"How are we going to get out of it?"

"Dunno. Can't you ask me an easier one, boy?"

"We've got to dig our own graves and be buried up to the neck, with heads above ground."

"That's what they say."

"How long can we live like that?"

"Forty-eight hours, I guess. It will be lovely for the insects and skeeters to be buzzing around and not able to knock them off."

"And the sun's heat and the thirst."

"We'll die raving mad."

They sat down and looked blankly at one another.

The prospect was not an inviting one.

Far from it.

"My word!" exclaimed Tinker. "What fools we have been!"

"Take it easy, boy," replied Monday. "Massa Jack always used to say, be not a pessimist, always be an optimist."

"What does that mean?"

"He explained it this way, always look on the best side of things," replied Monday.

"He was never going to be buried alive."

"Boy," said Monday, "we've been in worse danger than that, I tell you."

"It must have been pretty rough on you."

"That's so, but we belong to the tough crowd. Keep up your spirits, we'll come out all right."

Monday was cheerful, and Tinker gave himself up to contemplation.

The outlook was not promising, but they were not dead yet.

They hoped to hear the sound of young Jack's guns before the sun set the next day.

Would they, or would they not?

That question time alone could solve.

CHAPTER III.

THE ATTACK ON THE CAMP AT MIDNIGHT.

At nine o'clock the moon rose in all its argent splendor.

A cool breeze was blowing from the sea.

Young Jack Harkaway and Harry Girdwood had strolled from the camp to the shore.

They were watching the sad sea waves beating listlessly upon the shore on a slack ebb tide.

Guards had been posted on the camp, and a watch was on the deck of the steamer.

It was impossible for them to be taken by surprise.

That could not happen under any circumstances; at least, that was what they imagined.

Suddenly the moon was obscured by a dark cloud.

A few stars shed a feeble light upon the scene.

At that moment a shot was fired.

"By heaven!" cried Jack, "that means business! The outpost is on the alert!"

"Back!" exclaimed Harry. "I fear that Monday and Tinker have been captured and we are attacked!"

"There cannot be a doubt of it."

They lost no time in retreating to their camp and getting within their fortified lines.

Jack now saw the wisdom of his precautions.

Under cover of the darkness the Patagonians had crept up to the stockade.

They hoped to carry the position by assault.

But is this expectation they were entirely mistaken.

The firing now became heavy, and the rattling of the machine guns was heard.

Mr. Mole was gallantly working one of the latter.

Captain Sanford met Jack as he entered the camp.

"We are in for it," he said. "The enemy made a rush, but we drove them back."

"Do you think they will return to the attack after their repulse?" asked Jack.

"They are sure to do so. These savages are brave and stubborn when there is booty before them."

Jack had a six chambered revolver in his hand.

A flight of spears came into the camp.

One whizzed past young Jack's head, another narrowly escaped hitting Harry, and a third struck Captain Sanford in the chest.

He fell to the ground with a groan, transfixed by the spear.

"Keep it up, boys!" shouted Jack; "let them have it! Go it, Mr. Mole!"

"I will as long I can, dear boy," replied the old professor, firmly.

"Remember your younger days and what you used to do, sir!"

"Right. There is a kick in the old horse yet!"

The sailors gave a loud cheer.

This was answered by a defiant yell from the aggressive Patagonians.

All the time the firing was incessant.

The natives seemed to have an unfailing supply of spears.

Owing to the obscurity of the night, the fighting was done mainly in the dark.

Dark skinned warriors, however, could be dimly seen dancing about behind the sand banks.

Several of the sailors had fallen injured by the spears.

Two men were killed outright by these dangerous weapons of warfare.

With a terrific roar, blood-curdling in its sound, the enemy rushed over the sand heaps.

They swarmed into the encampment like rabbits.

It was a hand to hand conflict now.

Fiercely and remorselessly the battle waged. The pistols doing great execution.

At last, after suffering great slaughter, dismayed at their heavy loss, the enemy took to flight.

Then the clouds rolled by, and the moon shone out again.

It was possible now to ascertain the extent of the carnage.

Inside and outside the camp no less than a hundred natives had fallen.

Most of them were dead, the others being badly wounded.

The loss on Jack's side was five killed and three wounded.

In a few minutes the ship's surgeon was on the spot, busily attending to the injured.

A hospital tent was extemporized.

Mr. Mole had succeeded in securing a prisoner whom he had stunned by a blow with his rifle butt.

"Come here, Jack," he said; "don't tell me I am played out and can't do anything!"

"I never said so," replied Jack; "for I always had the utmost respect for your bravery!"

"Ah! I am the one who can do it! What is the young generation compared with the old?"

"He looks like a leader!"

"Come closer. I have not got my glasses on!"

Jack did so.

"Why!" he exclaimed; "it is a white man!"

"One of the captives we have heard about, no doubt."

"I should think so."

Getting closer Jack bent over him.

"What an extraordinary resemblance!" he exclaimed.

"To whom?" asked Mole.

"My old time enemy, Hunston. I never saw such a thing in my life."

It was the white haired man who had led the attack, hoping to avenge his brother's death.

At this juncture he revived, his injuries not being serious.

"Where am I?" he asked faintly.

"A prisoner in my camp," replied Jack. "I am ashamed to think that you, a white man, should lead savages against those of your own race."

"I had my reasons. Who are you?"

"Young Jack Harkaway," was the reply.

"Curse you and all your brood!" hissed Hunston. "But your star was always in the ascendant against us!"

"What do you mean?"

"I am Alfred Hunston's elder brother. A strange fate has brought us to meet in this Land of Fire."

Jack started visibly.

As for Mr. Mole, he fairly quivered with astonishment.

They were as much astonished at the revelation as Monday and Tinker had been.

It was an extraordinary coincidence.

"You Hunston's brother?" exclaimed Jack.

"Ay, and now I am in your power, I suppose I must expect his fate."

"That does not follow. What have I done to injure you?"

"I am a Hunston and never be the friend of a Harkaway," was the stolid reply.

"But my good man, I have no grudge against you."

"Perhaps not. Put it the other way. I have against you. I cannot forget the past. If I could get at your throat I would strangle you without mercy."

"He is dangerous," said Mole.

"Worse; he is mad!" replied Jack.

He beckoned a sentry who promptly advanced.

"Secure this man," he went on, "and guard him closely until I decide what is to be done with him."

"Yes, sir," answered the sailor.

Hunston was bound and taken away.

Harry Girdwood was a silent spectator of this singular scene.

"Wonders will never cease," he remarked. "Are you going to shoot him?"

"The vicious brute deserves it," replied Jack. "But think of Monday and Tinker."

"You will exchange him for them?" said Harry.

"Exactly. We must do all we can for them. If he is my foe I don't see how he can do me much harm."

"Nor I; your decision is a just and wise one."

"So I think and I quite approve of it," Mole chimed in. "You are doing right."

"But how to get at King Malagan!" Jack queried.

"That is the perplexing question, and I am sure I don't know how to answer it," rejoined Harry.

"Shall I go and interview Hunston and see what he will do?" asked Mole.

"You can, if you like," replied Jack. "It will do no harm, but do you think we can rely on him?"

"We can but try."

"That is so. Ascertain the fate of Monday and Tinker; if they are alive endeavor to arrange an exchange."

Mr. Mole departed and found Edward Hunston interred in a tent.

The doctor had dressed and plastered up the wound on his head, but the sentry had taken the precaution to bind him both hand and foot.

He looked very miserable and dejected.

Probably he was thinking of his wife and family in Karaki.

"Hunston!" exclaimed the professor, "I want to talk to you."

"Willingly," was the reply. "Are you the wooden-legged old man I have heard of my late brother speak of—Mole?"

"That is my name."

"Once a professor at Oxford University."

"The same at your service."

"Well, what do you want to say to me?" asked Hunston. "Am I to be hanged or shot?"

"Neither, unless you wish it. That depends on yourself."

"How? Be good enough to explain."

"Have you captured two of our men—Monday and Tinker?"

"Yes. They are in our power, and are to be buried alive tomorrow morning."

"Can you save them?" continued Mole.

"Certainly I can, if I chose to do so. I am all powerful in Karaki, for I married the king's daughter and lived there several years," replied Hunston.

"If we set you free and allow you to return, will you release your prisoners?"

The old man reflected a moment.

Much as he hated young Jack and all of his party life was sweet to him, although his years were declining rapidly.

"I will do that," he answered.

"Are you a Christian or a Pagan?"

"I have not renounced my faith, that fact I assure you of."

"Swear on the cross that you will keep your word and you can go at once."

"I swear it as I hope for salvation hereafter."

"Good. I will speak to Harkaway, await my return," answered Mr. Mole.

He went back to young Jack and made his report.

The sailors had dug a grave for the remains of their dead comrades. They were not, however, so considerate to the slain Patagonians.

Their bodies they tossed into the sea as prey to the sharks.

Those monsters of the deep indulged in a hideous feast, it being a ghastly sight to see them rend them limb from limb.

The water was red with blood and everyone turned away from the sickening scene.

"Well," exclaimed Jack, "what is the result of your interview?"

"He has taken his sacred oath that he will liberate the prisoners," Mole replied.

"Do you think we can believe him?"

"Chance it. Give him the benefit of the doubt, it will not do us any good to take his life."

"That is true. What do you say, Harry?"

"I agree with Mole," answered Girdwood.

"Yet he is a Hunston. You know what a spawn of snakes they are and how venomous."

"He is here and we shall be away as soon as we have stormed Karaki."

"We may meet him in some other part of the globe."

"I doubt it."

"All right, for the sake of Monday and Tinker you and Mole shall have your own way."

"Shall I liberate him?" asked the professor.

"Yes, at once. The sooner the better now the thing is decided upon," said Jack.

Mr. Mole again sought Edward Hunston.

"What is my fate?" inquired the old man.

"You can go, and mind you keep your promise, or when we take

the town of Karaki your head will not be worth five minutes' purchase," said Mole.

"If conquered we have a retreat in the mountains."

"We only want your idols of gold."

"Those you will never have."

"Wait and see," replied Mole, cutting the cords that bound him. "Don't exercise your mind too much on that subject."

Hunston sprang to his feet and stretched his cramped limbs.

"I go," he exclaimed, "but tell young Jack Harkaway that I thank him for nothing, and will never forgive my brother's death."

"Aren't you an ungrateful specimen of humanity? A regular, thoroughbred Hunston."

"I hope so. My word! I shouldn't like to be considered anything else," was the reply.

"I should think you get yourself disliked occasionally."

"What's that to you, old wooden leg?"

"Don't insult me," replied Mole, angrily, "or I'll give you another clip on the head!"

"Maybe it will be the other way."

Saying this Hunston dealt the professor a blow on the nose knocking him down.

The next instant he darted off like a deer into the moonlight.

Like a flash he was seen and then lost to sight.

Mr. Mole rose with difficulty.

His nose was bleeding and tears were in his eyes.

He could see that Edward Hunston was a chip of the old block.

In any part of the world he would be young Jack's most determined and life long enemy.

But how was he escape from Patagonia?

There were no ports or commerce in the Land of Fire.

Still, ships put in there occasionally for fresh water, and he might be taken off.

There was no telling what might happen.

"This is painful, not to say cruel!" exclaimed Mole, wiping his bleeding nose and his eyes. "The beast! However, it might have been worse. Let us thank the Lord for small mercies. He knocked me clean off my pins by taking a mean, cowardly advantage of me."

Going back to Jack and Harry, he found them in their tent smoking cigars, with a bottle of wine on a small table.

He told them what had happened.

They could not help laughing heartily at his misadventure.

"If ever I get hold of that fellow Hunston again I will pistol him!" said Mole savagely.

"You will have the chance to-morrow," replied Jack.

"How is that?"

"I intend to attack the pass early, and you can come along if you please."

"Rather be excused. I can't walk so far."

"I thought you wanted to kill Hunston?"

"Let the poor beggar live. Such cattle are beneath my notice," said Mole contemptuously.

"Oh, is that the idea?"

"I want a foeman worthy of my steel—not an insignificant rat like that. Bah!"

"Let us celebrate our victory."

"Happy thought! Book it."

"There is the bottle, help yourself. You never used to be backward in doing a thing of that kind."

"Nor am I now. I was always a spiritualist—that is a believer in spirits."

Mole laughed at his own joke.

"Here's to our noble selves," he added. "It is a poor soul that never rejoices, Jack."

"That's so. I always cook a turkey on Thanksgiving Day," Jack replied.

Mr. Mole kept on drinking. The excitement of the battle and the important part he had played in it, firing the machine gun and capturing Hunston, added to a little conviviality, as he called it, proved too much for him.

"Boys," he said, "let us have a little harmony."

"Go ahead, sir. Sing us a song," Jack answered.

"I will. What will you have?"

"Anything you like. Use your pleasure."

Mr. Mole took another drink, cleared his throat, and sang:

"Pony out the Rhine wine; let it flow
Like a free and brimming river,
For there's nought can cheer the hearts that fear
Like a deep, deep draught of the good Rhine wine."

Then he toppled off his chair and fell on the floor.

"Hello!" he cried. "What's the matter with this chair?"

"I guess it's had too much Rhine wine," replied Jack.

"If it hasn't, I have."

"Glad you own up for once in your life, sir."

"Open confession is good for the soul, Jack. The excitement of killing savages wholesale has proved too much for yours truly, Isaac Mole. See that my grave's kept green."

"Are you going to die so soon?"

"I feel that way. Let me lie—I'm orright—Subjore frigido, as dear old Horace has it—in the open air. Patagonians o di puer! More Horace."

"You can quote him by the yard."

"He was my favorite Latin poet. Nunc est bibendum, nunc pide libero, pulsanda tellus."

"Oh, shut up! Give us a rest on the classics."

"Orright. I'm going to sleep."

"The best thing you can do!"

"Sho I think! Goo'-night. Call me early if your waking, if not—go—go—Hades!"

The next minute the worthy professor closed his eyes and began to snore loudly.

"Poor old Mole," said Jack; "he's off to the land of dreams and temporary oblivion!"

"He's not such a bad fellow after all in an emergency—he tries to do his best," remarked Harry.

"Always did," replied Jack; "you can't help liking him with all his faults!"

"Your governor thinks a lot of him?"

"Yes. My father would do anything for him. You know they have been so long together!"

Two of the crew of the Vigilant now came up.

They were Johnson and Martin, first and second mates.

Their characters were said to be somewhat indifferent, but they were good men to work, excellent navigators, and Jack had no fault to find with them.

"What news?" asked Jack.

"Captain Sanford is dying, sir," replied Johnson; "the surgeon tells me he can't last long!"

"That is bad! I did not think a spear wound would prove so speedily fatal!"

"It has in this case!"

"I will go and see him. If he dies, you shall be captain, and you first officer, Martin!"

They both thanked him. Jack and Harry walked to the hospital tent.

It was as the officers had reported.

Captain Sanford was internally injured in a mortal way and had not long to live.

He raised himself up on his elbow as Jack entered and looked at him with lack-luster glassy eyes.

"I am going, Mr. Harkaway," he said.

"Sorry to hear that, Sanford," replied Jack.

"I hope, sir, I have served you well and given you satisfaction."

"You have indeed."

"God bless you all. Good-bye."

He fell back, closed his eyes and never rallied.

"Poor fellow," said Jack. "The worst of warfare is we lose our best friends."

They retired and turned in.

When the morning broke they were up, for they had little inclination for sleep.

There was no signs of Monday or Tinker.

"What do you think of the situation now?" asked Harry Girdwood, as they were sitting at breakfast.

"It is as I feared all along," replied Jack.

"We have been deceived."

"Grossly. You can expect nothing but a tissue of lies, deceptions and the basest treachery from a Hunston."

"They are a bad lot."

"The worst in the world. Don't I know them? If we want to save the lives of our friends we must hurry up."

"How do you mean to proceed?"

"Oh, my plan of campaign is simple enough. I shall take twenty men and two Maxim guns to the defile."

"And then?"

"Clear the pass with some of my dynamite bombs," continued Jack.

"Good idea! After that we shall carry all before us with our rifles and machine guns."

"Of course. The savages, brave as they are, can't stand before us for a moment."

"The only thing that worries me is the fate of our unfortunate friends," said Harry.

"Buried alive; it is an awful fate," mused Jack.

"I hope we shall be in time to save them."

"We will."

Breakfast being over, Jack ordered his column to fall under arms. This command was immediately obeyed with alacrity.

They were a very serviceable body of men, eager for the coming fray. Jack made a short speech.

"My lads," he exclaimed, "we are going to fight a horde of Pagans. We beat them last night and we shall do so again. I don't suppose in the daylight that one of you will get a scratch."

The order was then given to march.

A hearty cheer greeted this address.

Jack and Harry put themselves at the head of the flying column as it moved forward.

Each man moved with a swinging gait.

The advance on Karaki had begun.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATTACK—STORMING THE PASS—CAPTURE OF KARAKI—SEIZURE OF THE IDOLS—RETREAT OF KING MALAGAN—STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY.

In a couple of hours' time before the sun was high in the heavens the entrance to the defile was reached.

The formidable wooden gate was closed.

Evidently the Patagonians expected an attack and were prepared to resist it.

Jack halted his force.

"Stand to your arms!" he cried.

Taking one of his destructive bombs he cast it at the gate.

The result was as completely successful as he could have wished.

Strong as the door was, it was blown down.

In the narrow passage were to be seen a score or more of the natives.

Another dynamite bomb scattered them right and left, killing half and sending the other flying.

They could not understand this mode of warfare.

It was something entirely new to them.

"Forward!" cried Jack.

The men followed him and Harry Girdwood through the defile and entered the valley without opposition.

A little way off they saw a mass of men without any military formation or organization.

This was the Patagonian army opposed to them.

With terrible cries, yells and imprecations, they rushed forward to meet the invaders.

The machine guns were placed in position, manned and fired.

At the same time volley after volley was poured into the wild surging mob.

What wonder that their advance was checked.

It was not surprising that they fell back in disorder and rout.

Their shower of spears fell short, and they could not come to close quarters with their swords and clubs.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "They fly! After them at the double; clear the town at the point of the bayonet!"

Away sped the naval brigade after the retreating demoralized Patagonians.

Many more were shot.

As the gunpowder smoke cleared off, Jack noticed a crowd of women and children hurrying toward the mountains in the rear of Karaki.

It seemed an endless procession.

The men were drawn up behind them.

As for the city it was completely deserted.

The Patagonians did not intend to make a stand there.

Sword in one hand, pistol in another, Jack and Harry rushed at the enemy.

They were closely followed by the sailors under Johnson and Martin, the officers of the ship.

Stubbornly the giants resisted the fierce onslaught.

A hand to hand conflict ensued.

At last they broke and fled, two-thirds of their number being killed or wounded.

Only a few succeeded in getting away.

It was a complete and glorious victory for the invaders.

The latter lost, three killed and had five wounded.

This was not a serious list of casualties, considering the severe nature of the fighting.

"Pile arms," said Harry.

The men did so, and were glad of a little breathing time after the battle.

Harry was joined by Johnson and Martin.

But where was Jack?

That was a maddening mystery.

They discovered his absence in a moment, to their consternation and dismay.

Had he been taken prisoner in the bewildering melee?

That was the only conclusion they could arrive at.

"Say!" exclaimed Harry, "where's the boss?"

"I've looked among the killed and wounded and can't find any trace of him," replied Johnson.

"He must have been captured," said Martin.

"Then the fight is not over. We shall have to pursue to the mountains and storm the heights."

"There is nothing else before us."

"Give the order right away after the men have had a brief rest and such refreshment as they brought in their haversacks."

"Give us half an hour, sir."

"That will do. I want to make a search for Monday and Tinker, though I don't expect we shall see anything of them."

"And the idols," replied Johnson; "for we must have a look at them, you know."

"Oh, let them rest," answered Harry; "the living concerns us most at present."

"You're right."

They took a walk round while the men refreshed themselves.

They had not gone far before they were startled by strange cries.

Where they came from they could not imagine.

They looked around in all directions.

There was nobody to be seen.

The place, as we have previously stated, was entirely deserted.

It was like a city of the dead.

What could it mean?

"Hello! Help! Hi!"

Going in the direction of the sounds, they perceived two human heads sticking out of the ground.

Not an inch off a body was visible.

"Why, great Scott! it's Monday and Tinker," said Harry, excitedly.

He was right.

In spite of Hunston's solemn assurance that they should be set at liberty, they had been buried alive.

King Malagan had carried out his threat.

After digging their own graves, they had been put in the holes, and the earth stamped down around them.

They could breathe, but were utterly unable to move hand or foot.

"Get us out, sah!" exclaimed Monday; "the mosquitoes are making a meal of me."

"All kinds of bugs and flies are eating my skin," said Tinker.

"So glad you've come. I heard the firing," continued Monday.

"The wretches left us to die miserably."

"You shan't die if I can help it," said Harry.

"Not much," remarked Johnson. "Wait a minute."

The wooden spades that had been used for digging the graves were lying on the ground.

Harry took one, Johnson another.

They set to work with a will, and rapidly turned out the earth, which was loose.

It was not a long or difficult task to release the prisoners.

They were pulled out of the holes more dead than alive.

A drink from Harry's brandy flask revived them.

He always carried some cognac with him for medicinal purposes and cases of emergency.

"Golly, Massa Harry," said Monday, "you're a real Samaritan and friend in need."

"That's so," exclaimed Tinker. "I thought we were done for, till I heard your rifles. Where's the boss?"

"Made captive, I'm afraid," replied Harry, sadly.

"You don't mean that?"

"He isn't anywhere to be found."

"That's bad. I am sorry."

"In half an hour I shall attack the heights in the hope of rescuing him."

"They've got a cave a little way up the mountain. I heard them say so. There is a zigzag path and they've got a lot of rocks piled up to throw down on any party coming up."

"That is serious; it will not be an easy attack."

"Outflank them," replied Tinker. "There is plenty of scrub and chaparral on the mountain side."

"True. That would afford a good shelter."

"Sailors are used to climbing," put in Monday, "like goats or monkeys, they can go anywhere."

"Thanks for the hint."

"You are welcome, if it's any use to you, sah."

"I think it will be, and shall follow your advice and Tinker's. Come and have some refreshment after your resurrection," said Harry Girdwood.

"I feel kinder empty."

"Then fill up. I've got something in my knapsack."

"I just want to have a go at those fellows for burving us alive," remarked Tinker; "but they have taken our arms away."

"Never mind, each of you shall be supplied with a revolver."

"Who do you think is here, sah?" asked Monday.

"I know who you allude to. Hunston's brother, Edward."

"How you find that out?"

"The natives attacked us last night and were badly repulsed. We took Hunston prisoner. Mr. Mole captured him."

"Good old Mole."

"He's plenty of pluck in him, you bet."

"Yes sah! the old man's no slouch if he does get full now and then, he knows what he's about, but Hunston was here this morning. He helped to bury us."

"The traitor. I released him on the express understanding that he should set you free."

"Same old game, always with the Hunston's."

"You're right, there is no redemption for any of them," replied Harry, "this man will give us trouble."

"Bad thing for Massa Jack to fall into his hands."

"Do you think he will put him to death?"

"Can't tell, 'pears to me like it."

"We must hurry up the attack."

"Yes, sah, without delay. The sooner we are on the move the better," said Monday.

They moved off towards the spot where the soldiers were bivouacking.

During this conversation, Johnson, who was now the captain of the ship *Vigilant*, had espied his brother officer, Martin, and walked off to join him.

"We have liberated Monday and Tinker," said he, "the natives had buried them alive with their heads just above the ground."

"It's a case with young Jack Harkaway," replied Martin.

"What do you mean?"

"They are sure to kill him."

"Do you think so?"

"In my opinion there is not a shadow of a doubt. Let us walk through the town."

"We are going to storm the heights."

"I know. When the bugle sounds we can join the column. I am not anxious for any more fighting."

"Nor I."

"Yet we must do it for the sake of appearances."

They walked on, shortly coming to the temple in which were the famous and valuable idols of gold.

The doors stood wide open.

They did not hesitate to enter, as there was no one about.

All the priests of the Temple had fled with the other Patagonians.

No one was present to intercept their movements.

The sky had suddenly become overcast.

A thin, drizzling rain was falling, and a dense white mist was crawling over the valley.

It enveloped it all at once as if with a pall.

This was very much in favor of the attacking party.

It would hide their movements from the enemy.

Everything was in favor of an advantageous surprise.

When Johnson and Martin entered the Temple they saw the idols of gold.

These large images of solid metal roused their astonishment.

Their intrinsic value was immense.

Many years had it taken the Patagonians to collect the gold to mold them.

"My word!" exclaimed Johnson, "our late captain did not exaggerate the worth of these things."

"Not in the least. Size them up," replied Martin.

"I have. They must be worth a million."

"Harkaway and his friend, Girdwood, will have them all. What are we fighting for?"

Johnson spoke enviously.

"Nothing at all," said Martin.

"We are promised a suitable reward."

"What does that amount to?"

"Nothing at all. A mere bagatelle. Perhaps five hundred dollars cash."

"I wouldn't look at such an insignificant sum. If young Jack is dead, Girdwood and Mole would take the lot."

There was a momentary pause.

Both men were thinking deeply as their faces implied.

The greed of gold was on the pair of them.

Those idols would make them rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

"I tell you what I have a strong mind to do," continued Johnson.

"Name it, and if it is feasible I am with you," Martin answered.

"Simply this. Why should not the treasure be ours?"

"I don't see any reason why it should not. Only Harkaway and Girdwood stand in the way."

"We can dispose of them."

"In what manner?" asked Martin, turning red in the face, as if he knew what his friend was about to suggest.

"I can rely on the crew of the Vigilant to do just what I order them. It will be the easiest thing in the world to get up a mutiny when we put to sea."

"And murder Harkaway and Girdwood?"

"I don't say that. Murder is an ugly word. I don't want to stain my hands with blood if I can help it."

"What then?"

"Maroon them. By marooning I mean place them on a desert island and leave them to their fate."

"That will be worse than death."

"They can take their own lives if they want to."

"And what will you do with the idols of gold?"

"Make for some port and sell them at so much an ounce to a firm of bullion merchants."

"Good! The crew will want their share."

"They shall be well paid. A Jack Tar is easily satisfied, and after that we shall both be millionaires," replied Johnson.

"We will do it," exclaimed Martin, enthusiastically.

"Your hand on the bargain."

"Here it is. Put it there."

The two conspirators shook hands cordially.

"By heaven!" added Johnson, "there is no discount on these idols. Look at the size of them."

"No more work for us when we are the masters of those lumps of gold!"

"We will live like princes."

"It only requires an effort to carry out the scheme."

"And we are the boys to make it."

"You bet!"

At this juncture the bugle sounded the assembly and they hastily quitted the sacred edifice to join the ranks.

The attack was to take place without delay.

Harry Girdwood was impatient to rescue his dear friend, young Jack Harkaway.

An infamous plot had been concocted between Johnson and Martin.

It was an evil day for young Jack when he started in search of the idols of gold.

The sight of them had completely demoralized the two mates.

They were determined to commit any crime in order to make themselves suddenly rich.

Joining the column which was now ready to march they took up their positions.

"Attention!" cried Harry; "by your right, quick, march!"

The little body of men moved forward under cover of the mist which concealed them from view.

They did not fear a repulse by the enemy.

Their only anxiety was about the fate of their leader, young Jack Harkaway.

Personally he was very popular with the men, who determined to spare no effort to rescue him if alive.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRIESTS OF THE TEMPLE.

ALTHOUGH the city of the idolators was deserted, and the king and his people and warriors had fled to the mountains, the priests of Eidolon, as they called themselves, remained in the temple.

Not in the temple itself, where the golden idols were, but in the mazes of vaults underneath.

Their intricacies were wonderful.

Eidolon was the false god of the Patagonians.

Although he was but an image of gold they worshiped him.

The god was kept in one of the vaults, which was called the holy of holies.

Here the eye of the foreign invader could not gaze upon its hideous countenance.

By a contradiction—a paradox—the beauty of an idol with them consisted in its ugliness.

The three chief priests in a community of twenty-five, were Markrone, Mysore, and Delong.

They presided over the mystic rites when they invoked the aid of Eidolon.

The misfortunes which had lately overtaken their city and people affected them greatly.

Constant invocations went up to Eidolon.

But the supplications met with no response, for as we have said the city was empty, with the exception of the priests of the temple.

They had sworn to die before they would quit it.

All were men of their word.

To the very last they would protect Eidolon, their deity.

They were not agnostics, nor were they Theosophists.

Their creed was simply that which, since the days when the degenerate Israelites worshiped in the groves of Baal, has been called idolatry.

Priestcraft with them was a trade which they had found a profitable one.

They practiced celibacy, lived a lazy life, like some monks in monasteries, received offerings of food and grape wine from the people, and enjoyed themselves according to their lights.

Markrone, the high priest, had a vault to himself, which was fitted with every convenience.

Mysore and Delong lived together close by, and the other priests had one large common room.

They sang hymns to the accompaniment of rudely constructed wind instruments.

Also they had a drum made out of the hide of a bullock.

As may be imagined, their music was more noisy than melodious.

The Eidolon, strange to say, was not made of solid gold like the other idols up-stairs in the temple.

It was carved out of a solid block of wood.

Only on grand occasions was it taken into the temple and exhibited to the people.

Then the greatest enthusiasm prevailed, and gifts for the priests poured in.

The graven image was kept in Markrone's apartment, covered over with a piece of cocoanut matting, which the natives were very clever at making.

It was late in the afternoon after the battle and defeat of the brave Patagonians.

The high priest and his deputy, Mysore, were seated together on a large cushion made of matting and lamb's wool.

Before them, spread on a cloth, were various delicacies, such as chicken roasted, sheep's tongues boiled, lake fish, salad, wine and a kind of barley brew.

Markrone got up, uncovered the Eidolon, and kneeling down, bowed his head before it.

He murmured some sort of a prayer and afterwards remained silent and passive for five minutes.

Mysore made a monotonous noise by striking two pieces of wood together.

At last Markrone got up, and making an obeisance to the idol, resumed his seat.

"What does he say?" asked Mysore.

The high priest was supposed to have been in secret communication with the wooden thing.

"To avert further misfortunes from our nation we must have a human sacrifice," replied Markrone.

"One of the invaders?"

"Yes. A white man. They have driven our people to the hills. Many are killed and the others scattered. Woe is us—unutterable woe!"

"We may regain all."

"The Eidolon must be propitiated, blood alone will appease him, he must and will and shall have blood," rejoined Markrone.

"Who will supply the victim?"

"Delong has gone out to look for one. The insolent invaders are wandering about. One we shall capture before dark."

"Are you sure?"

"The Eidolon has said it."

"Very good. We will await events."

They ate and drank. Neither spoke. Markrone made peculiar gestures and Mysore beat the sticks together.

Truly a strange couple were these ignorant priests who had deluded other people until they made fools of themselves in the worst kind of way.

They fully believed that the only way to avert more trouble was to kill a white man in front of the Eidolon.

Human sacrifices were of frequent occurrence during the festivals of their church.

Presently Delong, who was a priest of gigantic height, being nearly eight feet, made his appearance.

He dragged after him an aged man who was an Italian sailor on board young Jack's ship.

The name was Marmora, a native of Genoa.

He had been wounded in the fight, his right arm being rendered useless.

Delong had found Marmora nearly exhausted sitting in the shade cast by a tree.

Relentlessly he had dragged him to the temple.

In vain the unhappy wretch protested and resisted.

He was helpless in the hands of his cruel captor, who saw in him a victim wherewith to placate the Eidolon.

"Behold!" cried Delong, "here is wherewith to propitiate the idol. A white man! An invader!"

"He shall die the death!" said Markrone. "You deserve the thanks of the Eidolon and the priests of the temple."

"Thank you. I only do my duty, which you have a right to expect, and I shall continue to do so as long as I live!"

"My services are due to you and the holy Eidolon."

While Markrone and Delong were talking, Mysore had not been wasting his time.

He had bound Marmora hand and feet and forced him on his knees in front of the idol.

By some hidden machinery which was moved by a spring fixed in the ground it was possible to make the idol open its mouth and move its limbs.

For instance, the legs lifted up and the arms waved, while the huge head nodded, and the capacious jaws opened.

The mouth was as cavernous as that of a hippopotamus.

It was capable of receiving the whole body of a man at once.

Marmora was perfectly unable to help himself even if he had not been shot in the arm.

At the same time he protested against the fate that was in store for him.

He might as well have talked to a stone wall, or to the fabled man in the moon.

The priests of the temple did not understand one word of English.

They grinned sardonically at him.

"Take care," he exclaimed. "Harkaway will revenge this. Do you suppose he will allow me to be butchered with impunity. I am one of his men. Cospetto! beware!"

They did not actually laugh as he spoke, but a smile came to their lips.

Markrone armed himself with a sharp wooden sword which he raised in the air.

The Eidolon waved its right arm.

Its eyes, made of bits of crystal, rolled terribly.

This was a signal for the sacrifice to begin.

The first blow aimed at the neck of the victim was not as dexterous as it might have been.

It made a terrible gash from which the blood spurted freely, but it did not kill the victim.

His cries were ear piercing and dreadful to hear.

Marmora struggled in vain to free himself, but could not do so.

A second blow was more effective than the first, for it severed the carotid artery.

He fell down in a pool of blood.

At this the Eidolon opened its huge, shark-like maw as if to devour something.

This was part of the performance.

Many a time had the surprised and easily gullible public on a feast day been deceived into the idea that the idol was eating a victim.

He was supposed to be able to do so and to appreciate these offerings.

In reality the trick was this.

Underneath the rocky chair on which the Eidolon was seated was a deep natural well.

The idol was hollow.

Anything swallowed apparently by it fell through into the well below.

Mysore began to make weird, uncouth music with his two old sticks.

Markrone and Delong indulged in wild incantations which completed the mystic rite.

Marmora had been sacrificed and they hoped the deity would be appeased.

But the contrary appeared to be the case.

The priests were intensely superstitious and believed firmly in omens.

As the Romans did they would count a flock of birds flying in the sky.

If the number was odd it signified good luck.

Should it be even it was an indication of some impending misfortune.

"I think now," exclaimed Markrone, "that the arms of our people will be successful."

"If not," replied Mysore, "we must go on the river through the mountain and visit the Prince Argomet, our friend and ally."

Argomet was a chief outside the valley which was fringed by mountains, as we know.

He ruled over a tribe of dusky-skinned Aztecs, who were no larger than dwarfs.

There was a strange contrast between them and the Patagonians.

The latter were colossal, the others pygmies.

But the little ones admired and liked the giants. They were always friendly and frequently visited one another, when you may depend upon it, savage though they were, they had a good time and enjoyed themselves.

Human nature is the same all the world over, and the savage is as capable of experiencing pleasureable emotions as the most highly civilized.

"Yes," said Markrone, "Argomet will assist and protect us."

"He always did," answered Mysore. "If we cannot rely on him, no one is our friend."

"The Aztecs are small, but they have sharp arrows and know how to fight with them."

There was only one way of reaching the Aztecs, and this was through a tunnel of natural formation.

This ran through a mountain and was the channel by which the small river, which irrigated the valley and supplied the town with water, entered.

A similar channel on the other side allowed it to go out, and a boat could be paddled through the murky depths of this acheron to the fair outside.

Delong sponged up the blood that had flowed from the body of the murdered seaman Marmora. He wiped the sword of wood with which he had been killed, and put it away.

The three priests then sat down and resumed the repast that they had for the time abandoned.

They were not allowed much leisure.

It happened that the rock on which the Eidolon was resting was of a crumbling nature.

Moisture arising from the well beneath had undermined it lately.

With a terrible crash the Eidolon fell into the well and was never seen or heard of again.

The effect on the priests was stupendous.

They rose to their feet, howled like dervishes and beat their breasts. Then they tore their hair and beards and wept bitterly.

Their cherished and worshiped Eidolon was gone.

"Fate is against us!" cried Markrone.

"We must seek Argomet and his Aztecs," replied Mysore; "nothing else can save us!"

It was arranged that Delong should stay with the subordinate priests and guard the temple.

If the Eidolon was gone, the idols of gold still remained with them.

It was necessary to protect them from the grasp of the ruthless invader.

Another Eidolon could be made when the war was over and peace was restored.

Idols are cheap and antiquity adds nothing to their value in Patagonia.

"The priests are complaining of sulphurous fumes which come through the earth as if there were subterranean fires at work," remarked Delong.

"That is nothing new," replied Markrone.

"But it is asserted that they are stronger than usual, more deadly and powerful."

"Leave the vaults and go to the upper part of the temple. You will have fresh air there."

"That is true, but we are afraid of the white invaders."

"In that case I cannot advise you. It is for you to use your own discretion."

There was undoubtedly danger from this pestilential vapor.

The priests were not used to living below.

They might be asphyxiated.

This Markrone and Mysore were thoroughly well aware of, but they could not interfere.

Just then they had other duties to perform.

The cherished and worshiped Eidolon had fallen, and they wanted to invoke the assistance of neighbors against young Jack Harkaway and his sailors.

They left the vaults together.

Quitting the temple they found the streets of the city deserted.

It seemed to them that they heard the sound of distant firing in the mountains.

They walked no further than the river which flowed through the city.

There were several rudely constructed wooden bridges over what was in reality little bigger than a stream.

Boats of various shapes and sizes abounded.

The two priests got into one of those, which resembled a flat bottomed scow or punt.

In a locker were some torches and a tinder box, with flint to strike a light.

Markrone took up a paddle, and seating himself in the stern, started the boat up the river, while Mysore sat in the bows and steered to the best of his ability with a piece of flat wood.

The tunnel through which the stream issued from the mountain was narrow, dark and forbidding.

When they entered it Mysore lighted a torch, which shed a lurid glare upon the water.

Undeterred by the darkness or the rushing of the water, they fearlessly pursued their way.

It was hard and dangerous work.

Sometimes the rocky passage narrowed; at others they had to bow their heads, the roof of the tunnel became so low.

There were multitudes of winding and turnings.

Nearly a mile had to be traversed.

It was an arduous journey.

But the priests had been through it before, and were not afraid.

They would soon see daylight.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHIEF OF THE AZTECS.

In a short time the boat in which the two priests were navigating the tunnel through the mountains, came to the other side.

There was first a gleam of light.

So faint as to be scarcely perceptible.

Then it became larger and wider. Eventually they were welcomed by a gladdening burst of sunshine.

Mysore threw the torch away.

"No use now," he said.

"We are not far from Argomet's village now," replied Markrone, "and I know he will make us welcome."

"Aye, and aid us, too."

When they got out of the boat and moored it to a tree growing by the river side, they had to walk a mile and a half to the town where the Aztecs lived.

They were a peculiar race of people, a degenerate race. There was little intelligence about them. They had a knowledge of agriculture, and bred sheep and cattle, not to a great extent, but just to supply their wants.

They had no trade.

The Aztecs, like the Patagonians in the valley beyond, lived by themselves and for themselves.

It was a commune.

One man was as good as another, and they shared equally what they produced.

It was past midday when the priests Markrone and Mysore arrived at the town of the Aztecs.

A larger mud hut than the surrounding ones indicated the residence of the king.

It was situated at the entrance to the place, and neatly embowered in palm trees.

The king was seated inside with a few of his favorites playing a game with small round stones.

There were seven holes in the ground.

Not very deep.

Rather round and shallow.

They somewhat resembled golf links, though they were not so wide apart.

The game was, in the Aztec language, called oolong, and was played by every one.

The passion for it extended from the highest to the lowest in the community.

It was extremely popular.

Each player had a dozen stones, and he had to try to roll them into the holes.

It was like bagatelle.

If he could not get one he might get another.

The man who holed the most stones won the game. If there was a tie it was played off.

Directly the king of the Aztecs saw Markrone and Mysore he rose to greet them.

As we have stated, they were well acquainted.

The customs of the tribe were peculiar.

Instead of shaking hands, each man lifted up a foot and that was shaken.

"They did not say how do you do. How is your health. We gehts, or la va bien."

"It was simply: "How would you like to die?"

The reply was: "easily and you!"

"When my time comes, without pain."

"Good. You have learned the lesson of life. Sit down and be happy."

This was the greeting.

The Patagonian priests sat down on the dry grass and were given some grape wine out of half a gourd.

It was fermented, palatable and not intoxicating.

Fruits were afterwards supplied.

"What is the cause of your welcome visit?" asked the king after an interval.

"We are sorely beset by some white men who have come from America to despoil us," replied the high priest Markrone.

"What do they want?"

"The idols of gold."

"How did they gain entrance to your peaceful and pleasant valley?"

"They stormed the pass with the weapons that vomit fire and shoot lead."

"Where are your warriors?"

"Most of them dead," replied Markrone, "the remainder have fled to the cave in the hills, with the women and children; there they ought to be safe."

"Perhaps," replied the King of the Aztecs; "but I must tell you that I have heard about these white men, and they say who have seen them that they are invincible. They can conquer anybody."

"Certainly they are great fighting men; but if you and your people will help us, we shall drive them out."

"I will ask our medicine man; he can see far ahead," replied the King of the Aztecs.

At this moment a taller man than the majority of the Aztecs was seen and heard coming up the garden path.

He had gray hair and his back was bent with the stoop of age.

"Woe! Woe! Unutterable woe to our race," he exclaimed. "I have read the stars."

He was an astronomer.

Also an astrologist.

There is a great difference between the two. The first named studies the stars, fixes their orbits, and places them in the heavens.

The second is one who tells fortunes by the stars and casts a horoscope.

"What have you discovered, father?" inquired the king.

"I have a power given me to look ahead, and I see misfortune in the air."

"In what way will it come?"

"By water. I have said it. Beware, it is beyond my power to save you if you are rash."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Is it not enough? If you cannot read the handwriting on the wall you are lost."

"Father!" cried the king, in alarm.

There was no answer.

The old man walked away to his tent and was seen no more.

Knowing the medicine man's disposition, the king of the Aztecs ceased to trouble him.

If he had done so he would have extracted nothing more out of him.

"I am alarmed at this prediction," said the King of the Aztecs, "but on no consideration will I desert my good friends, the Patagonians."

"We have always been allies," replied Markrone.

"As long as I can remember."

They conversed together long and earnestly.

The king was informed of all that had happened since Harkaway had appeared on that coast and made his raid on the happy valley to gain the idols of gold.

Those who heard of it thought it was not right.

They sympathized with their neighbors.

It was arranged that without delay thirty canoes should be launched on the river.

Each canoe was capable of containing five men.

This would bring the force up to one hundred and fifty men, armed with poisoned spears, bows and arrows.

It was a formidable little army.

With this reasonable help, Markrone hoped to crush the invaders.

To drive Harkaway out of the pleasant valley and into the sea, was all that they desired.

They had such confidence in themselves that they firmly believed they could do it.

While the flotilla of canoes was being got ready and the brave little Aztecs were arming themselves and putting poison on their spear and arrow tips, the sky became darkened.

In the West was another chain of snow clad mountains.

Here the river that flowed through the valley took its rise.

Lightning was seen.

The rumbling of distant thunder was heard.

Evidently a big storm was going on in that direction.

It did not seem inclined to spread.

The storm was localized, but rain was falling in torrents.

Where this was the case it boded no good to those in the valley.

The river was swelled. It overflowed its banks and a terrible flood filled the tunnel or underground channel, dashing against the sides and vaulted roof.

Such floods had often devasted the valley.

Houses had been swept from their foundations, cattle and sheep drowned and havoc played with the crops and gardens.

Disregarding the warning given by the elements, the Aztec king resolved to keep his word.

He ordered the men to man the canoes at once.

The foot of the white invader should not rest long on the sward of the valley if he could help it.

Markrone and Mysore led the way.

They got into their boat and started for home first.

As they entered the tunnel there was no perceptible increase of the current.

It was just about the same as usual, though the storm in the Hinterland continued.

"I trust," said Markrone, "that no further misfortune will pursue us."

"What do you dread?" asked Mysore.

"If the water comes down from the hills there will be a fearful flood."

"It will soon subside."

"But should it overtake us in the tunnel, or the Aztecs, what would become of us?"

"Death would be our portion."

"Do you not apprehend it?" asked Mysore.

"No. There is a rainbow in the sky and that is a message of peace."

"The fall of the Eidolon predicted dire distress to our race!"

"I attach no importance to that!"

"On the contrary I do."

Just then the mouth of the tunnel was reached.

They plunged with the stream into the recesses, cavernous and gloomy depths of the mountain.

Mysore lighted a torch.

Without a light they were at the mercy of the tide, which to their alarm, began to rise momentarily.

Their progress on the return journey, was more rapid than it had been in going.

This was because they had the stream with them, which was an advantage in one way.

But not in another.

It was necessary for the pilot to keep a sharp lookout, lest the nose or side of the boat should strike against the sharp projecting ledges of rock, which here and there protruded.

Markrone was a skillful navigator.

He knew every turning and dangerous point in the winding tunnel. After a time they struck daylight and came into the valley.

Here they beached the boat and landed.

"So far so good," exclaimed the high priest of the temple. "If our friends, the Aztecs, join us, we shall be able to resist the foe."

"Let us hope for the best," replied Mysore.

"At all events, we will defend the temple and the idols of gold."

"To the last! With all our might and main."

"If the Eidolon had not fallen, my heart would not fail me in the least."

"Mine does not. It was only an accident."

"Call it an omen."

"I do not regard it in that light."

There was a pause.

Suddenly a huge rush of water came through the tunnel like a torrent.

It swelled the bulk of the stream, which overflowed its banks.

The priests had to run to higher ground, or they would have been swept off their feet.

They gained a coign of vantage from which they could overlook everything.

Water bursts like this were not uncommon.

They did not last long, but while they did they caused confusion and damage.

Away went the torrent, sweeping all before it.

Sheep and cattle grazing in the valley were carried forward and hurled on the plain.

But this was not all.

Something happened in a moment which they had not calculated upon.

It dashed all their hopes to the ground.

With a sudden dash the tunnel vomited a volume of water.

With this came a confused, inextricable mass of material.

There were canoes upside down, fragments of smashed boats, and, sadder than all, dead bodies.

The latter were frightfully mutilated.

A majority of them were dashed against the jagged jutting rocks until their faces were unrecognizable.

Their best friends, their most intimate relations would not have known them.

These were the brave little Aztecs who had come to the rescue of the dejected Patagonians.

Coved in the center of the tunnel by the torrential flood, caused by a cloudburst in the mountains, their canoes had been tossed about like corks.

They were splintered into matchwood.

The Aztecs were killed to a man. They floated on the stream or were cast on shore.

"We shall have no assistance now," said Markrone, in a low, sad voice.

"The Eidolon did not fall for nothing," replied Mysore, who was similarly affected.

"It portended evil."

"Did I not tell you so?"

"You've tried to propitiate the Eidolon by a human sacrifice."

"It was too late."

"Ah, yes, we delayed too long."

They walked away, silent, gloomy, despondent, and retraced their steps to the temple.

Here they intended to defend the golden idols so long as they could draw breath.

But another bitter experience awaited them.

The temple up-stairs was empty.

Silent were the aisles.

Raising the trap door which gave admittance to the vaulted chambers below, they descended.

The atmosphere was peculiarly depressing.

It was thick and mephitic.

Sulphurous subterranean vapors permeated the lower regions.

They came out of the earth.

Strange fires were at work below.

The trap door fell with an ominous crash over the heads of the priests as they went down the steps of stone.

Denser became the atmosphere.

They could scarcely draw their breath.

Delong was right.

There was death in the air.

Their respiration became more difficult at every step.

When they reached the repository or priests' room in common, they were astounded.

Every one of the twenty priests of the temple was stretched out on the floor.

They were clasped in the cold embrace of death.

Each one of the twenty was asphyxiated.

The noxious vapors soon attacked Markrone and Mysore.

In vain they attempted to fly.

They panted for fresh air.

It was not to be for them.

Staggering like drunken men, they reeled towards the entrance.

Before they could reach it they sank down.

It was impossible to rise again.

The malaria had got a firm hold of them and they were in the grip of death.

Their struggles were fruitless.

Slowly they sank and died.

There was an end of the priests of the temple.

The fall of the Eidolon was the fall of them.

No longer were the idols of gold to be their cherished fetishes.

The legend of the Patagonian temple was a thing of the past.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG JACK A PRISONER.

In the height of the melee with the Patagonians, Edward Hunston crept up behind him.

Giving him a blow with a club he stunned him.

Two gigantic natives who had been previously instructed what to do, took him up in their arms.

One held him by the shoulders, the other by the feet.

Without any delay they hurried off with him to the mountain.

He was securely captured.

When they reached the zigzag path they ascended it.

Soon afterwards the Patagonians were beaten back.

The path led to a ridge or plateau. In the side of the mountain was a fissure like a doorway.

Within this was a vast cave, and behind it another one.

In the latter were huddled together the old men, the women and the children of the tribe.

They had an ample supply of provisions, and plenty of water, which trickled from a hole in the rock.

All were terribly frightened at the rout of their warriors.

What would come next they did not know.

They had considered their army invincible, and fancied their valley impregnable.

But they were grievously deceived.

It was hard to be driven out of their homes at a moment's notice.

Yet they were comforted by thinking they were in a place of safety.

The foreign devils, as they called the white men, surely would not dare to scale the mountain side.

If they did they would be demolished.

Such was their opinion.

Little did these poor, ignorant savages, know of the white man's dash, go, and resources.

Young Jack was deposited in the outer cave, and not being much injured soon came to his senses.

At first he could not understand where he was, or what had happened.

He was soon informed, however.

The beaten Patagonians came trooping into the cavern.

Among them were King Malagan and Hunston.

Very much depleted in numbers were the savages.

In the two battles that had taken place and the storming of the pass, they had lost over two hundred men.

The women were crying and waiting.

Husbands and brothers had been slain by the score.

It was a lamentable and heart-rending scene.

Hunston at once went to the corner of the cave where young Jack was sitting up.

As we have mentioned his ideas in general were somewhat confused.

As soon as he recognized Hunston he saw it all.

He had been captured in the progress of the fight.

"So," exclaimed Hunston. "You are in my power now, as I was in yours last night."

"It is the fortune of war," replied Jack. "I trust you will be as generous to me as I was to you."

"Why should I be? There is no one of ours to ransom or exchange. Why do you come here and slay our people? Our idols of gold are ours. What right have you to them?"

Jack could make no answer to this question.

He felt the full force of the stinging argument.

"You have brought mourning into many a household," continued Hunston, "by your filibustering. If those people are savages they have their feelings. Mankind does not differ much in any part of the world."

"You refuse to let me depart."

"Most decidedly. Your father shall never see his son again, and my unfortunate brother will be revenged at last."

"I never injured your brother."

"Your father did, and that is the same thing."

"I think," retorted young Jack, "that from all I have heard, it was the other way."

"No matter," answered Hunston, "it amounts to the same thing. You shall die a lingering death."

"Put me out of my misery at once."

"Not so. I will gloat over your misery and feast my eyes on your prolonged agony."

"You are a cold blooded brute anyway."

"I am; it pleases me to find you have made the discovery."

Saying this, Hunston walked away.

In spite of his bravado, Jack's flesh crept with horror.

What were they going to do with him?

Edward Hunston had imbibed the savage instinct during his prolonged residence among the Patagonians, and was capable of perpetrating any cruelty.

He saw some men, acting under Hunston's orders, place two pieces of wood together in the shape of a cross.

These they strapped together and placed on the ground.

One piece was longer than the other.

He was then taken up and placed on this cross. His arms were stretched out, and he was firmly bound.

The cross was then raised and leant against the wall.

It was a crucifixion.

"There you will remain," said Hunston, "until you perish miserably of hunger and thirst."

"Fiend!" cried Jack. "You are unworthy of the name of man!"

"I can show no mercy to a Harkaway."

"My friends will avenge this in a way you little expect."

"They cannot reach us here."

"Do not make too sure of that," said Jack.

"Our giants will hurl them down the mountain side. We are secure here," replied Hunston.

He turned on his heel and left him, going into the inner cave where King Malagan was trying to comfort the women.

The pressure of his body soon began to tell on Jack's arms, which ached terribly.

He could have cried out with the pain, it was so severe.

The Patagonians looked at him and jeered, making insulting remarks in their own language, which he did not understand.

It was his Calvary.

The only thing that sustained him was the certainty that Harry Girdwood, on finding him missing, would make a gallant attempt at rescue.

Not for one moment would Harry linger.

At any minute he might expect to hear a hearty cheer and the sound of the guns.

How welcome it would be.

By sparing his life, they had at any rate given him a chance.

He was the victim of a refinement of cruelty, but at the same time he was alive.

Suddenly there was a sound of firing outside. A rush of men came into the cave, which was dimly lighted by oil lamps.

Harry Girdwood and his gallant sailors had come to the rescue, and the giants of Patagonia were surprised.

A hand-to-hand conflict took place.

Those who could escape, ran outside and hid themselves in the brushwood on the mountain side.

Among these was Edward Hunston.

He saw that certain death awaited him if he remained.

King Malagan was slain by a thrust from a sword bayonet, just as he was trying to brain Jack with a club.

Fastened to the cross, he could not help himself.

He was completely at the mercy of the savages. It was Harry Girdwood who saved him.

The cave was now cleared.

A short time sufficed to liberate young Jack, who was more cramped and strained than exhausted.

"How can I thank you, old fellow?" exclaimed Jack. "You have come in the nick of time!"

"It's a cold day when I am left," replied Harry. "What would I not do for you, dear old boy?"

"I know it."

"We crept up under the cover of the fog, drove in the advance guard. You know the rest."

The loss of the white men in this brief contest had been small.

An examination of the dead and wounded was made, but to their disappointment Hunston could not be found.

It was discouraging to think that their arch enemy had escaped.

However, it could not be helped, and they did not think he could do them much harm.

They held a brief council of war.

There was no necessity to occupy the town, as the Patagonians were nearly exterminated.

Their king was killed.

Those who were left could offer no further resistance, and the only thing left to do was to get the idols of gold down to the coast.

Jack determined to use one of the carts the natives used for moving their produce and hauling wood.

They were strongly built, though of rude manufacture.

Drawn by six bullocks, he reckoned that they could move two a day to the ship.

That would take a week to transport the twelve; but their time was their own, and they were in no hurry.

A week on shore and then hoist the blue Peter and away for home and beauty.

While Jack and Harry are making their preparations to evacuate the town we must follow Hunston.

The unexpected rescue of young Jack infuriated him to a high degree.

He determined to risk and sacrifice everything in order to carry out his vow of vengeance.

He was essentially a man of resources and ingenious devices.

Going to his house, which was close to the late King's palace, he went into a room and opened a trunk.

On the top was written John Barnes, actor, New York City.

It was salvage from a wreck which had taken place on the coast, and he had appropriated it as his share of the spoil.

The man who owned it had been drowned with the rest of the passengers and crew.

He had been a traveling actor going from one city to another.

"Now for a disguise," muttered Hunston.

He took out a very dark slightly curly wig, a bottle of face dye, a razor and a false nose made of India rubber.

This was bent in the form of a bird's beak and fitted so admirably that no one could detect it.

With a pair of scissors he cut his hair by the aid of a looking glass, and made it quite short.

He then shaved his long beard and side whiskers, the dye was applied to his nose and face, the beard had gone, the wig was adjusted, and he was a typical Hebrew.

"I will be Isaac, the Jew," he continued: "young Jack Harkaway has escaped me once, but he will not in the long run. I shall go to the camp by the sea and tell him that I am an escaped captive of the Patagonians. He cannot refuse to take me on board. No one will know me and I shall have time to work my revenge. I will follow him to the bitter end."

He was certainly completely metamorphosed.

No one could have detected Hunston in Isaac, the transformed Jew.

It was a splendid device, and he chuckled as he contemplated himself in the glass.

When he was satisfied with his appearance he left the house and walked through the valley to the defile.

The corpses of those who had fallen in its defense were still there, silent and motionless.

Young Jack's dynamite bombs had done great execution.

He walked to the seashore and reached the camp, where Jack and Harry had already arrived, leaving the main body under Johnson and Martin to follow them with the first of the idols of gold.

The sentry challenged him.

"Who goes there?"

"Friend!" replied Hunston.

Young Jack and Harry Girdwood came out.

"My good fellow," cried Jack, "who on earth are you? Are you in the old clothes line, for we have only what we have got on and can't do any business with you."

"It isn't bishness I want to do mit you. I was Isaacs, the Jew," replied Hunston.

"Where did you spring from?"

"I was a prisoner mit the Patagonians. Wrecked and captured. Now I make my escape."

"I never heard of you before."

"Oh, I was well known in New York City, where I kept an old clo' shop in Baxter street."

"Why didn't you stop there?"

"Because I was bankrup'—dead broke, you know, and going to San Francisco."

"How long have you been here?"

"Twelve months. Quite long enough. Got tired of it? Yes, sir. Will you take me along mit you?"

"I suppose we shall have to, though I don't see what possible use we have for you."

"Father Abraham! I will work for you. Knot, reef or steer, cook in the gallery, wait on table—do anything for you."

"Very well, Isaacs; you can stay and make yourself generally useful. Come inside."

Hunston had completely deceived them.

They did not know him at all, and fully believed he was the Jew Isaacs he represented himself to be.

His story about being wrecked and made captive was firmly credited.

Jack, being short handed, set him to work washing up dishes and making a fire to cook something for dinner.

Mr. Mole was sitting under a palm tree, drinking some Rhine wine.

"That's a peculiar looking Sheeny," said he to Jack. "Captain Sanford did not say anything about him."

"He's been wrecked since his time, sir—only twelvs months ago," replied Jack.

"What a beak he's got on him!"

"Enormous. Good enough for two."

"So I should say. Any one could tell he was one of the chosen people."

"You bet!"

At this moment a monkey overhead dropped down a cocoanut and knocked the bottle out of Mole's hand just as he was going to help himself.

"Confound it," cried Mole, "who did that?"

Monday and Tinker arrived at that time.

"Ah," continued Mole, "that was one of your larks, Tinker. You ought to respect an old man's feelings. Throwing nuts is not an amiable proceeding, and I am very much annoyed with you."

Another nut came down and hit him on the shoulder.

Mole sprang up enraged.

"That was you, Monday," he exclaimed. "At your age you ought to know better."

"Hope I do so; wasn't me," replied Monday.

"I had nothing to do with it," said Tinker. "It was one of your ancestors in a remote age, up above."

"Is it possible?"

Mole looked up and saw the same monkey poising another nut to throw at him.

He narrowly dodged the missile.

"They've got it in for you, sir. What have you been doing to them?" asked Tinker.

"I'll be hangod if I know," replied Mole.

"Perhaps they are annoyed at the family resemblance."

"Go away; don't mock me. There is more of the monkey about you."

"Do you think so, sir? I don't."

"You only want a tail, Tinker, and you would be a perfect Simian."

"What's that sir?"

"Go to school again! Get your dictionary and find out."

"Too late for that!"

"Your education must have been sadly neglected, my lad!" said Mole.

"Yes, sir. My father and mother never did their duty by me," replied Tinker; "I ought to have had you for a tutor!"

Mr. Mole walked disdainfully away.

"Alas! for the rising generation!" he muttered.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MUTINY.

THE Vigilant had been three days at sea steaming for the South American coast.

Her destination was the port of Valparaiso.

Johnson was in command. Martin was his second officer.

The weather proved exceptionally fine.

Up to the present time those two worthies had shown no sign of treachery or insubordination.

But they were maturing their plans.

In another twenty-four hours they saw by the chart that they would come to a group of Pacific islands.

These were marked as being uninhabited.

At the same time there might be savages on some of them, probably cannibals.

The golden idols were all stowed securely in the hold of the ship.

Young Jack had achieved the end and object of the venturesome expedition.

Yet he didn't know the difficulties these golden effigies were destined to bring upon him.

He, Harry Girdwood and Mr. Mole, were sitting in the cabin after dinner, smoking and sipping their wine.

The professor was in a happy condition.

"I feel good," he exclaimed. "I'm afloat, and a life on the ocean wave is the thing for me."

"You have drunk wine enough this afternoon, sir, to float a ship," replied Jack.

"Have I not earned my rations? Look how bravely I fought against those giants."

"I shall have to stop your grog."

"What! Place an embargo on the old man? Never! You could not find it in your heart to do so. Shall we have no more cakes and wine?"

"You are not sober now."

"I deny it. You are a prevaricator, an economist of the truth. It's a base libel. I was never tipsy in my life!"

Jack and Harry burst out laughing.

"If I stagger at times, it is because the stuff gets into my wooden leg."

At this remark, their merriment was renewed.

"Fact, I assure you," added Mole.

"A bad excuse is better than none," said Jack.

"Let me tell you that cork is an absorbent. My leg is made of cork not wood. The drink goes to my leg. There you have it all in a nut shell. Q. E. D. Quid erat demonstrandum, as Euclid has it."

"Suppose you took your leg off."

"Now you place me on the horns of a dilemma, for I should lose my equilibrium anyway."

"You are fairly cornered."

"Not so. You have not brought your argument to a logical conclusion, but as I am not in the humor for talking I will go on deck and take the fresh air."

"That is what I should advise you to do. It is the best thing."

The professor rose.

He had not gone far before he stumbled and fell on the rope, where he reclined gracefully.

"There you go at it again," said Jack.

"What did I tell you?" replied Mole, complacently. "It's the leg; don't say it's me. The leg has been imbibing. I am emphatically in the power of the leg."

In a few minutes Mr. Mole was snoring on his back in blissful ignorance of his surroundings.

"Same old Mole," remarked Jack.

"And always will be," replied Harry. "It's a wonder how he stands it."

"The force of habit. Use is second nature. By the way, what do you think of that Jew fellow Isaacs we have taken on board?"

"I've sized him up and I guess he's harmless."

"It is curious that Captain Sanford never mentioned a Hebrew captive among the Patagonians."

"Not at all."

"How do you make that out?" asked Jack.

"Easily enough. Sanford had been away for some time. The Jew says he has only been here a few months."

"That's so; I'd forgotten it. Twelve months at the outside," Jack answered; "yet I don't like the look of that fellow."

"He can't do us any injury."

"You are always an optimist while I am inclined to be rather the opposite."

"I prefer to look on the best and brightest side of everything," replied Harry Girdwood.

Just then Tinker entered and took a seat.

His face was rather grave and he kicked his feet in a restless uneasy manner.

"What's the matter?" asked Jack; "are you a little bit under the weather, my boy?"

"I'm thinking there is something wrong going on in this ship," Tinker rejoined.

"How's that?"

"Johnson, Martin and the Jew, Isaacs, are always together talking in whispers."

"Well, that is natural. I put Isaacs on as a forecastle hand."

"Yes, but I overheard a few words they let drop just now, and I tell you there is some underhand business."

"It must be your imagination," said Jack.

"Maybe, but I don't think so."

"What did they say?"

"This is the gist of what I heard. I will condense and put it all together in a nutshell."

"Do so; I am anxious to hear your statement."

"The three men seem to be thoroughly in accord," Tinker went on; "acting together, in fact."

"Precisely so. They said that they were determined to have the idols of gold."

"Ha!" cried Jack, "that is serious, indeed."

"I thought you would consider it so," replied Tinker.

"Go on," Jack said, impatiently.

"They added that they had sounded the crew who were with them to a man. To-morrow they expected to sight some island, and then they would know how to act."

"That is rank mutiny," cried Jack.

"It portends mischief the worst way," observed Harry, who was much concerned.

"Isaacs told them not to delay, but to act at once," continued Tinker. "It's a mutiny, and it is coming to a head before you have any idea of it."

"I see it," replied Jack. "They mean to make us prisoners, the scoundrels! Seize the ship and put us four ashore somewhere."

"That's about the size of it."

"How is the dastardly scheme to be prevented?"

"That is the all important question."

They looked blankly at one another in silent amazement at the unparalleled audacity of the movement.

It was mutiny on the high seas.

They began to deliberate.

Tinker suggested shooting the ring leaders on sight, which would terrify and subdue the crew.

In this opinion Harry Girdwood coincided.

To parley with them would be a waste of time and breath, and only provoke an open conflict.

It was determined to adopt this drastic course.

Desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and they must be had recourse to.

They were about to rise and go on deck when the door of the saloon was violently opened.

Johnson, Martin and Isaacs made their appearance.

"Hands up if you wish to save your lives!" exclaimed Johnson imperiously.

All were armed with seven chambered revolvers.

The attacked had no time to reach for their weapons and were completely at the mercy of the mutineers.

Mr. Mole was as helpless as a child in his vicious state and could not be relied upon for help.

There was nothing to be done but comply with the demand.

Jack, Harry and Tinker held up their hands and were promptly seized and bound.

"What is the meaning of this, Johnson?" inquired Jack.

"Simply that we intend to have those golden idols," was the reply.

"You and the rest shall have half of them. Will that suit your views, my man?"

"No. All or none."

"What do you intend to do with us?"

"Maroon you. Put you on an island with a tent, some fire arms, and a boat load of provisions. That's fair and handsome, I guess."

"We've no grudge against you personally," remarked the mate Martin.

"No," added Johnson. "It's the gold we want."

At this juncture Hunston took off his black wig and false nose, disclosing himself.

"Hunston!" ejaculated young Jack.

"Yes; I told you that you had not heard the last of me," was the calm rejoinder.

"Tricked by a disguise!"

"What did you expect? I vowed vengeance and I always keep my word."

The lookout man on deck was now heard from.

"Land ho!" he cried.

They had sighted the islands sooner than had been expected.

"Now, Mr. Harkaway," continued Hunston, "you will be marooned and you can take my curse with you."

"Do not be too sure that it will not recoil on yourself," answered young Jack, boldly.

"I have no fear of that, for I have nothing to reproach myself with."

"In that case I am sorry for your conscience, if you have one."

The mutineers left the saloon to go on deck and make preparations for landing their captives.

A gloomy prospect was before them, but it was not so bad after all. There was always a prospect of being taken off.

It appeared afterwards that Hunston was strongly in favor of hanging them to the yard arm.

But this Johnson and Martin would not hear of for a single moment.

They were more humane and merciful.

Theirs was not a murderous instinct, and Hunston was not the captain of the ship.

He could not have his own way in everything.

All the mutineers wanted was the golden idols.

They were going to give their former masters arms, ammunition, a tent, and a boat load of provisions.

This was generous, and showed a good spirit.

A couple of hours elapsed.

Then the steamer stopped, and Johnson came down, telling them to get ready to embark.

Mr. Mole was awakened with difficulty, and was greatly surprised when he was informed of what had happened.

They got into a boat and were rowed to an island, which had a most charming aspect.

It was far from being barren.

On the contrary, it was fertile in the extreme and abounded in fruit and vegetation, and was well watered.

Another boat followed containing the promised stores and Monday, who had been captured on deck.

They were soon all landed, the boats put off, and when they had joined the Vigilant the steamer swiftly disappeared from the offing.

Young Jack and his companions were marooned on what was presumably a desert island.

But they had not yet seen the last of the mutineers, among whom we shall next find YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY.

[THE END.]

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